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LYRIC POEMS;

WITH THE

LIFE OF THE AUTHOR.

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JAMES MERCER ESQ.

Τὸν περι Μῦσ' ἐφίλησε· δίδυ δ' ἡδεῖαν ἀοιδήν.

Nat. 1733. Mort. 1804.

Published July 1. 1806 by R. Faulder, New Bond Street.

LYRIC POEMS;

BY THE LATE

JAMES MERCER, Esq.

WITH AN ACCOUNT

OF THE

Life of the Author,

BY

SYLVESTER (DOUGLAS) LORD GLENBERVIE.

Τὸν περὶ Μέσσ' ἐφίλησε· δίδυ δ' ἡδίαν ἀοιδήν.

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THIRD EDITION.

London:

PRINTED FOR R. FAULDER, NEW-BOND-STREET,

BY J. BRETTELL,

MARSHALL-STREET, GOLDEN-SQUARE.

1806.

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Mer/Lyr.
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ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE

SECOND EDITION.

THE Author of these Poems is a gentleman who passed the early part of his life in the Army, and who has since lived chiefly in retirement.

Emma, who is mentioned in several of the Poems, and to whom they are inscribed, was the Author's wife, and sister to the Editor*. She was a person of distinguished beauty in her youth, as was easily perceivable to the latest period of her life, notwithstanding a long series

* Lord Glenbervie.

of uninterrupted illness, which she bore with exemplary patience, and truly Christian resignation. Her husband had the misfortune to lose her about a year and a half ago.

Note.

THE SEVEN POEMS IMMEDIATELY PRECEDING THE LAST (VIZ. "TO FOLLY") WERE ADDED IN THE SECOND EDITION.

(PREFIXED TO THE FIRST EDITION.)

TO

EMMA.

MY DEAREST SISTER,

I HAVE taken upon myself to hazard the publication of the following Poems.

Notwithstanding the long and uninterrupted intimacy which has subsisted between us, my friend never hinted to me the thought of printing them; nor did I ever suggest it, either to you or to him, till about a month ago.

I do not believe two persons exist, more attached to another, than you and I are to him;

and our wishes for the successful reception of these Poems by the world, are proportioned to our affection for their Author.

You know the opinion I entertain of their merit. Yet, conscious that my partiality for him is extreme, after the possession of some of them for more than twice the time of deliberation prescribed by HORACE, I now deliver them over to the severe tribunal of general criticism, in doubtful hope and trembling solicitude.

I ever am,

My dearest Sister,

Yours most affectionately,

THE EDITOR.

London,
Dec. 20, 1794.

AN ACCOUNT

OF

THE LIFE

OF

JAMES MERCER, ESQUIRE.

SINCE the publication of the last edition of Mr. Mercer's Poems, in the beginning of the year 1804, the friends of the Author have had to mourn his death; and, on the occasion of a new impression, I have willingly yielded to the desire which many persons have expressed, of seeing, drawn up, by the Editor, some account of that accomplished companion of his early days,

and constant friend of his subsequent life. Some of the particulars about to be mentioned, have already been communicated to the public, with the review of the last edition, in one of the late numbers of a most ingenious and justly celebrated periodical work; and some others will be found in the Appendix to the interesting publication of the Life and Correspondence of Dr. Beattie, by Sir William Forbes.

Major James Mercer, was born on the 27th of February, 1734, and was the eldest of two sons of Thomas Mercer, Esquire, a gentleman of private fortune, in the county of Aberdeen; who was descended, I believe, from a branch of the family of the Mercers of Aldie, in Perthshire.

The Major received his early education, first, at the High School of Aberdeen, once celebrated for having initiated in classical learning several of the most eminent Latinists of Scot-

land; a country, which, though since lamentably fallen off in that respect, can boast of having formerly produced some among the best, if not the very best, modern writers in that language.

He afterwards pursued the established course of classical and philosophical studies, at the Marischal College, and became a favourite disciple of Dr. Thomas Blackwell*, Principal, and Professor of Greek, in that college.

By this remarkable person, equally distinguished in his day, and among those to whom he was known both in England and Scotland, for his skill in Greek and Roman literature, and for his affectation and singularities, Mr. Mercer was inspired with that ardent passion for the wri-

* Author of "Essay on the Life and Writings of Homer," "Letters on Mythology," and "The Court of Augustus."

tings of the Ancients, and particularly of Homer, which accompanied him through life, and provided him with a fund of perpetual amusement, I might almost say occupation, in every situation in which he afterwards found himself; in the camp, in cities, and in retirement; while it was, not unfrequently, amongst his surest consolations, under severe disappointment, and still heavier and more irreparable misfortunes.

Mr. Thomas Mercer, the father of our Author, like a great many of the gentry in that part of Scotland, in those days, was attached to the cause of the family of Stuart; and, having embarked in the rash and fatal enterprize of the year 1745, was obliged to abscond, and, afterwards, retired to France; where he spent the rest of his life, chiefly at Paris. There, his society consisted, for the most part, of his numerous countrymen, who resided as exiles, either in that city, or at

St. Germain, in consequence of the part they had taken on that occasion, or in the year 1715. Among others, he had an opportunity of cultivating his relation Mr. Robert Arbuthnot, a brother of the famous Dr. Arbuthnot, whose general residence was at Rouen, but who sometimes visited Paris; and who, though then far advanced in years, was still remarkable for those original and estimable qualities, so particularly described by Mr. Pope, in the following passage a letter to Mr. Digby:

" His (Dr. Arbuthnot's) brother, who is lately " come into England, goes also to Bath, and is " a more extraordinary man than himself, " worth your going thither on purpose to " know him. The spirit of philanthropy, so " long dead to our world, is revived in him. " He is a philosopher all of fire, so warmly,

" nay so wildly in the right, that he forces all
" others about him to be so too, and draws
" them into his own vortex. He is a star, that
" looks as if it were all fire, but is all benignity,
" all gentle and beneficial influence. If there
" are other men in the world that would serve a
" friend, yet he is the only one, I believe, that
" could make even an enemy serve a friend."

But Mr. Thomas Mercer had also many acquaintances and friends among the French, particularly the Ecclesiastics. He was a great reader of Theology, and, though a strict and sincere Protestant, was much addicted to those ascetic practices of mortification and self-denial, which are considered as so meritorious by the more rigid among the Roman Catholics; insomuch, that, on several occasions, during his residence in France, he shut himself up in the monastery of

La Trappe, and voluntarily underwent, for weeks and months, all the hardships to which that fanatical order was made subject, by the rules of its institution *.

His son, after having finished his academical course at the University, where he acquired the reputation of an excellent scholar, but discovered little turn for abstruse science, joined his father in France, and resided with him at Paris for several years, and until the breaking out of the Seven years' war. He then returned to Great Britain, with the secret intention of embracing a military life (for which he had shewn a strong and early propensity), as soon as he should be able to reconcile his parents to that step; both of whom were, he knew, too strenuous adherents of the abdicated family, to be easily persuaded to approve of his engaging in

* Mr. Thomas Mercer died at Paris in the year 176 .

the service of the House of Hanover. He soon, however, found means, by the prudent interference of friends, to obtain the consent, or, at least, the connivance of his father.

In the mean time, and on his first landing in England, a circumstance happened to him, which would have perplexed many persons, but which was to him only matter of amusement, both at the time, and in the recollection of it. He had taken his passage, in a neutral vessel, for Dover; but, being dressed in the French manner, of a lively countenance, and perhaps not without some air of levity acquired at Paris, and speaking the French language with the ease and fluency of a native of the country, (which accomplishment he probably took no great pains to conceal,) the vigilance of the officers of government at that place made them think it their duty to detain him, till they should

be able to transmit information, and receive instructions from London. The representation they made, it would seem, was such, that it was deemed prudent to send a messenger from the Secretary of State's office, to take the supposed Frenchman into custody, and conduct him to Whitehall; in order to his examination, and the adoption of such further measures concerning him, as, upon due investigation, should be thought necessary. Accordingly, a messenger arrived in a few days at Dover, with whom our author travelled to town, and in whose house he remained confined for some time; till the Secretary of State found leisure to attend to his case. In the mean time, he had made his situation known to a relation who was an eminent merchant in the city, and to some other friends of his family; and, on their attendance and testimony, at his examination, he was liberated of

course.' Mr. Mercer used to mention, with particular pleasure, in relating this adventure, the uncommon attentions and civility he received from the messenger, (whose name I think was Ross,) as well as the good cheer he partook of while he continued his prisoner, or guest; and which was, I suppose, as in such a case, it ought, in fairness, to be, at the charge of government.

Soon afterwards, having first paid a short visit to his native place, and to his mother and other relations there, he carried his plan of engaging in the military career into execution, by joining, as a volunteer, the expedition which was then destined for an attack on Cherbourg and St. Malo, on the coast of France, and which terminated in the unfortunate repulse from the Bay of St. Cas.

After the failure of that expedition, Mr. Mercer proceeded to the British army in Germany,

then under the command of Lord George Sackville, still as a volunteer; but, after a short time, he obtained a commission of ensign in one of the English regiments serving with the combined army; and was afterwards promoted to a lieutenancy in a battalion of Highlanders, which had been newly raised by Lieutenant Colonel Campbell.

In these different situations, he continued on the Continent for several years, participating in the dangers, and, in his own youthful imagination, sharing in the glories of the many brilliant victories, which, during that period, were gained over the enemy, by the allied army, under Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick. Among other memorable battles, he was engaged in that of Minden, of the particulars of which he retained a very accurate recollection, and was often, among his friends, a lively and interesting narrator.

Amidst the duties and fatigues of these German campaigns, and, indeed, from his first entering into the army, till he quitted it, he was ardent and assiduous in his application to the study of the most celebrated military authors; of Xenophon and Polybius in Greek, Cæsar in Latin, and, among the moderns, Montecucoli, the Chevalier Folard, Marechal Feuquiere, and Marechal Saxe, and even Macchiavel's Art of War; a work, which, though not written by a soldier, he held in great estimation.

He had also the fortune, while serving on the Continent, to contract friendships with several fellow-officers, who afterwards distinguished themselves in different situations, and particularly with Mr. (afterwards Sir Robert) Murray Keith, then commandant of another Highland corps, raised by himself, and whose military spirit, and strong predilection and taste

for literature, especially poetry, were congenial to his own.

He was likewise at that time, and afterwards, intimate with that amiable officer, the late Sir Robert Murray, the father of General Sir James Pulteney; with Mr. (afterwards General) David Wedderburn, brother to the late Earl of Rosslyn; with Sir James Innes, one of the present claimants of the Roxburgh estate and title, the two last having also commissions in Campbell's regiment; and with the Lord Downe, who commanded the 29th regiment of British infantry, at the battle of Minden, and until he was mortally wounded, at the affair of Closter Campen, in October, 1760.

Of the warlike ardour and singularly chivalrous enthusiasm, which he used to say characterised that young nobleman, who was lost to the service and his country when only 37 years of

age, our author was a great admirer, and frequently related several striking instances in which those qualities were displayed*.

Mr. Mercer, at the same time, attracted the favourable notice of Prince Ferdinand, the Commander in Chief; of his nephew then so justly popular, under the description of the Hereditary Prince; and of his own more immediate superiors, Lord George Sackville, and the Marquis of Granby.

Once, while he was employed with a small number of officers and soldiers of his own regiment, on some detached service, their little band was overtaken and made prisoners, by a superior force of the enemy. Mercer, and the other officers and men, were all in their correct Highland uniform, a thing at that time so new and

* Henry Pleydell Lord Viscount Downe, was uncle to the present Lord Viscount Downe.

strange to their captors, as to excite great surprize among them, and induce them, with the view of amusing the curiosity of their Commander in Chief, the Marechal de Soubise, to send the officers to head-quarters. But the astonishment occasioned by their motley garb there, was much increased, when there was found, among those supposed barbarians, and in their barbarous dress, a young man, who, added to a certain Parisian air and manner, spoke their language perfectly, and possessed their favourite authors, both military and classical, as familiarly, and, perhaps, more so, than most of themselves. These advantages procured, not only to Mercer himself, but to his companions, every sort of favour and kindness, until, after a captivity of several weeks, they were exchanged.

Some time before the peace of 1763, I think in 1761, General Græme, father to the late Lady

Hampden, who had married a first cousin of Mr. Mercer, having undertaken to raise a regiment, presented his young relation with a company, who, in consequence, returned to Great Britain, and (after a very short stay, first in London, and then at Edinburgh) to Aberdeen, the place of his birth, and early education. Here he passed the winter of that year, in the society of several persons of understandings more cultivated, and a better style and taste in conversation, than are often to be met with in places at such a distance from the metropolis.

His company was always acceptable to the various celebrated professors then belonging to the two colleges of Old and New Aberdeen, Dr. Reid, Dr. Campbell, Dr. John Gregory, Dr. Gerrard, and Dr. Beattie; all of whom fill a considerable space in the literary history of the concluding part of the last century; and Pro-

fessor Thomas Gordon, who, though he never had the exertion, or ambition, to write for the public, was inferior to none of his contemporaries in general and solid learning.

Major Mercer also enjoyed the acquaintance and friendship of Mr. Patrick Wilson, a gentleman much older than himself, but endeared to him, by his exemplary probity, and an uncommon share of erudition, and who then led a very retired life at Aberdeen, after having filled, with unsullied reputation, a respectable office under government, in one of our West-India colonies*.

But the persons with whom Mr. Mercer chiefly associated, were a set of gentlemen, men of letters, not by profession, though Dr. Beattie was frequently of their parties, but by inclination, and voluntary application and taste; and

* He was the father of George Wilson, Esq. of Lincoln's Inn, one of His Majesty's Counsel.

who, though confined to that limited sphere, were qualified to have acted a conspicuous part in much more elevated situations. Among these, one of the most remarkable, for a strong understanding, a genuine flow of humour, a great memory, and familiar acquaintance with Roman, and almost all modern literature, was a person, whom I trust I shall be excused for particularizing, (though urged to this recollection of him, by the more partial impulse of filial affection and gratitude,) as he was the father of the lady whom our author afterwards married. This gentleman was John Douglas, Esq. of Fechil, the owner of a small estate about eighteen miles to the North of Aberdeen, and grandson, and direct male representative of Robert Douglas, the last Bishop of Dumblane; a prelate, whose learning, and apostolic character and virtues, are commemorated, both by his con-

temporary Craufurd, in his Peerage of Scotland, (pp. 104, 105), and by Keith, in his Catalogue of Scotish Bishops, (p. 108.) and who was himself the grandson, and male representative, of James Douglas, next brother to William, the ninth Earl of Angus*.

In Mr. Douglas's family, Mr. Mercer became acquainted with his only daughter, Miss Katherine Douglas, then a young lady of the age of eighteen, and of beauty so transcendant, that the memory of it is still fresh in that part of the world, and will be long preserved, by the composition, in her praise, or, at least, the appropriation to her, of an air, and words,

* They were great nephews to Gawin Douglas, Bishop of Dunkeld, the celebrated translator of the Eneid, and one of the fathers of English Poetry; being the grandsons of his brother Sir William Douglas, of Glenbervie, who, with an elder brother, George Douglas, Master of Angus, fell in the ever-memorable battle of Flodden-Field, 1513.

which have become popular in all parts of the United Kingdom.

Miss Douglas's mother, of the name of Katherine Gordon, was one of the three daughters, and co-heiresses, of James Gordon, Esquire, of Fechil, great-grandson of Sir Robert Gordon, of Straloch, the celebrated Scotish Antiquarian and Geographer.

In the spring of 1762, Mr. Mercer's regimental duties called him from that country, and, during his absence, Mr. Douglas died, at the early age of 49.

In 1763, peace was signed, and the Queen's Regiment (General Græmes's), with other new corps, was reduced.

Mr. Mercer, being now at liberty, returned to Aberdeen, and renewed his acquaintance with Miss Douglas, or indeed rather openly avowed an attachment, which had been gaining ground

ever since their first acquaintance, and which proved to be reciprocal. In the summer of that year they were married, by Dr. Reid, who had not yet removed to Glasgow; and, after having lived some time at Aberdeen, in the same family with Mrs. Mercer's step-mother, the widow of Mr. Douglas, they went to Ireland, where the 49th Regiment, in which Mr. Mercer had lately purchased a company, was quartered.

In that country they passed the chief part of nine or ten years, shifting from different stations, according to the destination of the regiment.

While in quarters at Cashell, Mr. Mercer became acquainted with Dr. Cox, at that time Archbishop, and grandson to Lord Chancellor Cox*; and, partly by his uncommon share of literature, partly by the conviviality and liveliness of his

* Author of a History of Ireland.

temper and conversation, grew into such favour with that prelate, that he pressed him to take orders, with the promise of almost immediate promotion, to a valuable living in his Grace's disposal, then likely to become soon vacant.

This offer was not without its temptations to our Author: his military ardour was now somewhat damped, by the inactivity of peace, the slowness of promotion, and the disappointments incident to the British service; and, also, perhaps, by increasing years, and the comforts, as well as cares, belonging to the domestic relations of husband and father: he and his wife had both been brought up according to the tenets and worship of the Church of England: and their pecuniary circumstances were neither affluent, at the time, nor promising, for the future; for, his mother was known to have formed the

design, which she afterwards accomplished*, of leaving the fortune which her husband had bequeathed to her, to a younger son; having taken offence at the eldest, both on account of his having embraced the military profession, and of his having married without her approbation and concurrence.

But, notwithstanding these motives, and, I believe, principally from the persuasion, that it would be difficult for him to acquire the demeanour, and duly perform the serious and manifold duties, which he justly thought indispensable in a beneficed clergyman, he declined accepting the Archbishop's liberal and flattering offer; though with every expression, and sense, of the intended obligation.

After this, he obtained, by purchase, the

* She died at Aberdeen, in the year 178 .

majority of his regiment; and having held that commission for some time, he concluded, in 1772, a treaty with the Lieutenant-Colonel (Sir Henry Calder) for the purpose of becoming his successor; a treaty which was confirmed by Lord Townshend, then Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, in the usual official communication to the English government. This, in general, or, I believe, I may say, universally, had been considered as completing every part of such a transaction, except the mere form. But, by the operation of some powerful influence at home, (very improperly used, I must say, on such an occasion,) the Lord Lieutenant's recommendation was disregarded, notwithstanding repeated and angry representations from his Lordship, (which I had occasion afterwards to see in the official correspondence); and another person received the commission. Mr. Mercer, in the

mean time, relying on the faith of the Irish Government, had deposited the stipulated purchase-money, and, from a strange fatality, soon afterwards, the misfortunes of an intimate friend were the occasion of his losing nearly the whole of that deposit, which, had it not been for his confidence in the right and the power of the Lord Lieutenant, would never have been put in jeopardy.

Accident, many years afterwards, furnished the writer of the present sketch, with an opportunity of representing the particulars and hardship of this case, to Lord Westmorland, when Lord Lieutenant, and of obtaining for his friend and relation, through the justice and kindness of his Lordship, some compensation for the loss he had sustained; a circumstance most grateful to himself, but which he should not have mentioned, but for the wish of testifying, thus publicly, his sense of what

he owes to the ready attention given by that nobleman to his representation, and his immediate adoption of the only mode of reparation, which, at the time, could be made, with advantage, on the one side, and propriety on the other.

Major Mercer, under the natural feeling of disgust occasioned by this disappointment, took the sudden resolution of selling out of the army, and, on his quitting it, he and his family, consisting of Mrs. Mercer and two daughters, retired to a small cottage in the vicinity of Aberdeen.

But, in the Spring of 1774, a trial of the air of the South of France having been recommended to Mrs. Mercer, who had been almost constantly an invalid, after the first year of their marriage, they went, by the way of London, to that country; and resided, nearly two

years, in the province of Xaintonge, at or near the town of Pons.

In that better climate, Mrs. Mercer's health was somewhat improved: but Mr. Mercer himself being attacked, during the latter part of the time, with a return of a severe rheumatic affection, to which he had been long subject, in consequence of frequent exposure to cold and wet, while serving in Germany, it was thought adviseable, that he should revisit his native country, in the Autumn of 1776.

During this last residence in France, though in a retired province, he perceived such a prevalence of that innovating spirit, that contempt for authority, whether in civil government, or religious doctrines, which has been a principal cause of the unexampled disasters since inflicted on that country and a great part of the rest of Europe, that he not only relinquished former and

early prejudices and predilections in favour of the French nation, but fell a little too much into the opposite extreme; by contracting an exaggerated dislike, not merely to their philosophy, but to their wit and literature; of which he had been, till then, a professed admirer and advocate. This dislike increased upon him as he grew older, and continued to the end of his life.

While he remained in Xaintonge, he became in some degree acquainted with the relations of two very remarkable men, whose fathers, or grandfathers, had been refugees from that country; — Mr. Garrick, and Colonel Barré; both of whom had a little before, though at different times, made a tour into that part of the world. The French kindred, both of the one and the other, were of reputable characters, but in very humble situations of life. Barré, however, had gone on purpose to see his relations, had spent

several months among them, partaking of their sober fare and homely lodging, and, by the amiable attentions as well as essential kindnesses he had shewn them, had won the hearts of all the country, and left behind him universal affection, and regret. Mr. Garrick, pressed in point of time, or from whatever other cause, had the mortification of being obliged to pursue his journey from Bourdeaux to the other remarkable places he wished to see in France and Italy, without visiting any of his respectable though obscure connections, in this province of his ancestors.

Not long after Mr. Mercer's return, with his family, from France, a regiment of Fencibles was raised by the Duke of Gordon, and he accepted a majority in that corps; a circumstance, which, connecting him, in that capacity, with his colonel, led, by degrees, to a friendship and

intimacy, with the Duke and Duchess, which, I believe, never afterwards suffered any diminution. They had both been already prepossessed in his favour, by the report of Dr. Beattie*, and others; and our author had too quick a sense of excellence, not to become a devoted admirer of her Grace's eminent beauty, and not less so of the extraordinary vivacity of her conversation, and the readiness and brilliancy of her wit.

The Gordon Fencibles having been for some time stationed at Glasgow, our author there renewed, with equal assiduity and pleasure, an almost daily intercourse, with that distinguished philosopher, and truly worthy man, Dr. Reid,

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* Dr. Beattie writes of him to the Duchess in the following terms, in a letter dated January 10, 1779:

"Major Mercer, with more learning than any other man of my acquaintance, has all the playfulness of a school-boy, and unites the wit and wisdom of Montesquieu, with the sensibility of Rousseau, and the generosity of Tom Jones."

who had then occupied, for several years, the chair of Dr. Adam Smith, in that University.

From Glasgow, Mr. Mercer removed, with his family, to Edinburgh, (I believe with the regiment). Here he and Mrs. Mercer had an opportunity of completing the education of their daughters, now approaching to womanhood; and Mr. Mercer that of passing much of his time with some of the companions and friends of his youth, and his frequent correspondents in absence; particularly Sir William Forbes his relation and old school-fellow, the late Mr. Robert Arbuthnot * of Edinburgh, and his cousin Colonel Robert Rickart Hepburn, the brother of Mrs. General Græme †, who, for

* Major Mercer, and these two gentlemen, were named by Dr. Beattie, joint executors of his will.

† Their mother and Mr. Mercer's were sisters.

several years, had represented the County of Kincardine in Parliament.

On the conclusion of the American war, and the reduction of the Duke of Gordon's Fencibles, the family returned to the neighbourhood of Aberdeen, where Mercer passed the greater part of the remainder of his life; first in a very retired cottage which he rented, and afterwards at a pleasant little villa, which, by an accession of fortune, on the death of his brother,* he was enabled to build, and surround with shrubberies and plantations, according to his fancy. To this villa, from its warm southern aspect, he gave the name of Sunny Bank.

His eldest daughter was now married, to a gentleman of good family and fortune in the county; and for some years, both he, and Mrs.

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* His name was David: He died a bachelor, in the year 1787.

Mercer, and his other daughter, passed a considerable part of the year with them. He also made some excursions to Edinburgh; and once, before he lost his wife, in the beginning of the year 1796, revisited London, and spent some time there, and in the neighbourhood, with his brother and sister-in-law; his journey having been occasioned by a severe domestic misfortune, which, notwithstanding the consolations of friendship, philosophy, and religion, clouded the remaining days, both of himself and Mrs. Mercer.

His health was now much impaired, and Mrs. Mercer a perpetual invalid, and, for the most part, confined to her bed-chamber. These circumstances induced him nearly to lead the life of a recluse. He scarcely ever dined out, and he saw very little company at his own house. His chief society consisted of Mr. Moir of Scotstown, a gentleman of good estate, excel-

lent understanding, and classical knowledge, who had been always among the most intimate of his friends and companions; of Professor Gordon; of Dr. Beattie, while his health admitted of his seeing or being seen by his friends; of Mr. Macleod, the worthy and respectable Principal of King's College; and also of Sir William Forbes and Mr. Arbuthnot, during the annual visits they usually made to that country. But, besides writing occasionally to those two last mentioned gentlemen; sometimes to his cousin Colonel Hepburn; sometimes to the late learned and excellent Sir David Dalrymple, Lord Hailes, (who had long entertained, at intervals, a correspondence of letters with him); and to Dr. Reid; and often to his brother or sister-in-law, in London; his chief occupations were reading, and walking. The latter, both as an exercise and amusement, he had practised all his life, when in the coun-

try, with so much pleasure and constancy, that he had formed to himself a sort of system upon it, and, considering it as a species of elegant art, had often thought of writing a regular poem on the subject, with the title of "*The Art of Walking in the Country*," as a contrast to Mr. Gay's "*Trivia*," or "*Art of Walking the Streets*." Some of the embryo ideas of this intended poem may be perceived in the verses, intituled "The Saunterer."

Mr. Mercer had now undergone many of the irreparable losses to which those who approach the verge of old age, are, by the laws of our existence, necessarily exposed. Mr. Moir had been dead several years; Dr. Beattie, oppressed with sorrow and sickness, was chiefly confined to his bed, with an almost total loss of memory, and, indeed, of most of the other faculties of his mind; Dr. Reid and Lord Hailes

were also gone: but he was soon to suffer the severest blow of all, in the sudden and unexpected death of Mrs. Mercer; who, though so long a patient and resigned martyr to a complication of painful and irksome complaints, expired, at last, early on the 3d of January, 1802, without any previous warning, either from the exacerbation of her ordinary symptoms, or the accession of new ones. She had, that morning, expressed to her husband, a desire, with which he had complied, that she might be left alone, as she felt as if she could enjoy a little sleep. But her maid going into her room, after a short interval, found her cold and breathless, yet in so undisturbed a state and attitude, that she seemed as if she had passed away without a struggle, and without a pang. She had then nearly reached her 59th year, having been married almost 40 years, and during all but the first of these, so

great a sufferer, as to have been very often confined to her bed or bed-chamber, and for the last part of her life almost uninterruptedly. The sphere of her acquaintance was, therefore, not even relatively large, and the memory of her piety, affection, virtue, charity, and angelic softness and sweetness of temper, exercised with the daily performance, when her health would permit, of all the nearest and most important duties of her sex, and fit to have formed a pattern for every female excellence, would have died with herself, or, at least, with her local contemporaries, and connections *, had it not been for some tender and affecting allusions to those qualities in her husband's Poems, and this, I trust pardonable, and, in the eyes of

* Non la connobbe il mondo mentre l' ebbe,
Conniobbil' io, oh' à pianger qui rimasi.

some, perhaps laudable, though inadequate, attempt to do them justice. She did, indeed, possess all those qualities in so eminent a degree, as, in my experience, never to have been equalled, but in one other instance, in the same sex, to which I can bear still stronger testimony, and which will readily occur to some of those who may take an interest in the perusal of these pages, from sentiments of partiality either towards the author or the subject of them. —Mrs. Mercer was born in April, 1743.

The shock of her death so deeply affected her husband, that not only his health, which had long been on the decline, daily became worse, but his mind sunk into a fixed melancholy, which no efforts of his own, no affectionate attentions of those who still remained with him, could remove. Such attentions he experienced, to an exemplary degree, from his younger daugh-

ter, who was now married *, and, at that time, resident at Aberdeen; from his eldest grand-daughter by his other child †, who had lived from her infancy with Lady Glenbervie, but was then on a visit at Sunny Bank; and from the two amiable daughters of that eldest child's husband by a former wife, then also forming part of the family at Sunny Bank. But, though nothing could restore his serenity of mind, yet, by these endearing attentions, and the correspondence of his brother and sister-in-law, his thoughts were, sometimes, and at short intervals, diverted to

* To Major John West.

† She died in 1780, leaving three sons and three daughters. The eldest son is now a Captain in the navy, and the youngest an Officer in the artillery. The second died at Ceylon, (where he had an office in the civil service, under Governor North,) in the year 1803. Of the daughters, the eldest, mentioned above, was married, before her grandfather's death, to a very respectable clergyman, in the county of Sussex.

other objects, and his grief, in some respects, alleviated at least, if not suspended.

In the spring of 1803, Major and Mrs. West having been obliged to proceed to Jersey, where his corps was quartered, Mr. Mercer was prevailed upon to accompany them as far as London; at which place, and in the country near it, he again passed a few months with his brother and sister-in-law. But the journey, and change of scene, had no salutary effect on his health, or the state of his spirits; and he returned, by the way of Edinburgh, to his house at Sunny Bank, about the beginning of Autumn, with every appearance of approaching dissolution. He, however, lingered on, till the 18th of November, in the ensuing year. His memory, formerly remarkably retentive, was sensibly impaired, even while he was in England. It became daily more and more so, after his return; and his mind

constantly preyed upon by the thoughts of his former and irrecoverable happiness, of which he still retained a too lively recollection, was, for months before his death, almost totally alienated, and gone; an effect ascribed, as well as his death, by the eminent physicians who attended him, entirely to his inconsolable grief, for the loss of the object of his tenderest affection, and the companion, and partner, of his good and ill fortune, for little less than half a century.

THE unwillingness of Major Mercer, to entrust even his most intimate friends, with the secret of his poetical amusements, was so excessive, that, if it could not be well authenticated by the still living testimony of some of the most respectable of those friends*, it would hardly appear cre-

* Appendix to Sir William Forbes's Life of Beattie.

dible: it really seemed almost a sort of distemper.

I have good reason to believe, that, till the first edition of his Poems was extorted from him, and then printed without his name, his poetical friend Dr. Beattie had no reason to suspect that he had ever exercised himself, seriously, in that sort of composition. His brother and sister-in-law, were almost the only exceptions he had made, and one or two female friends, besides, in whose taste or partiality for the occasional productions of his muse, he felt an equal degree of confidence. One of these was a distinguished Lady already mentioned, and to whom the poem, to be found at page 97 of the new edition, was addressed.

The first edition, in 1797, can hardly be considered as having been a publication. The circulation of the few copies then printed was very

limited, chiefly by presents from the editor, to particular friends; and the book was scarcely noticed by the literary world, till the good taste, and avowed and warm approbation, of two ladies, not less eminent in rank, than of acknowledged superiority of genius, and endowments natural and acquired, and both equally unacquainted with the author, produced, at once, a general curiosity concerning him, and an eager demand for his poems. This circumstance gave occasion to a second edition, which appeared early in the year 1804, nearly a twelvemonth before his death, and (although almost against his will), with his name prefixed.

In the mean time, two of the poems had been printed in the first, and were, afterwards, repeated in the second edition, of the collection called "The Metrical Miscellany," compiled, as many of the best pieces in it were written, by

a fair and very ingenious poetess*, who was so little aware who the author was, that she placed the initial letter L. before his two poems. Neither had the Editor of Mr. Mercer's Poems, at the time of the first publication of the "Mc-"trical Miscellany," the honour of knowing that lady; and it is natural to suppose, from what I have mentioned, that he was a good deal surprised, when he was informed of the appearance of those two poems in her collection, and much at a loss to know how they could have come into her possession, or what could have led her to prefix the letter L. to them, as an initial of the author's name. He has since had the pleasure of forming her acquaintance, and has had some communication with her on the

* Authoress, also, of an interesting account of Burns, inserted in Dr. Currie's Life of that extraordinary man.

subject; and the result has been, that he has been able to trace, in a satisfactory manner, the accident by which, through intermediate means, they came to her hands, from a most amiable and regretted person, now dead, to whom he had intrusted copies of them. This, indeed, he had also done, about the same time, to Mr. Cumberland, and a few other persons. But, in those copies (from some of which, or transcripts of them, they must have been printed in the "Metrical Miscellany,") the poems remained in the state in which they had been originally composed, and were first transmitted, in the author's hand-writing, to the Editor: This appears, by a comparison with the first manuscripts still in his possession. Mr. Mercer's scrupulous and fastidious judgment, however, prompted him, afterwards, and at various times, to alter these, and many others of his poems,

till, at last, they took the shape in which they were printed in 1797.

Yet there may be more than one reader who will regret some of his alterations and retrenchments. Two stanzas, particularly, of the Ode to Folly, as it stood at first, and as it appears in the "Metrical Miscellany," have so much merit, in my opinion, that I cannot help inserting them in this place. They form there the second and third stanzas.

"Source of the sweets that never cloy!
Folly, indulgent parent! hail!
Thine are the charming draughts of joy,
Which childhood's ruby lips regale:
Thy hands with flowers the goblet crown!
And pour th' ingredients, all thy own.

"No fiery spirits enter there,
To rouse the tingling nerves to pain;
Thy balmy cups, unbought with care
Swim lightly o'er the tender brain;

Bland as the milky stream they flow,
Nor leave the pûngent dregs of woe."

The Editor of the "Metrical Miscellany," cannot now recollect, what her reason was for prefixing the letter L. in the first edition: It was omitted in the second.

IT is not intended, in this place, to enter into any regular criticism of Mr. Mercer's Poems: their merits and defects will best speak for themselves. A few general observations, however, may be permitted.

In the first place, it seems to me, that a leading characteristic, of almost all of them, is a philosophical turn of reflection, on the progress of human life, of human passions, and human pursuits, in various situations, from the cradle, to the grave.

Secondly, I think it will appear evident, to

an attentive reader, that those reflections were the offspring of the author's own experience, and were, from time to time, suggested by actual circumstances. That, in fact, was the case; and they were, as such circumstances occurred, in most instances addressed, in the author's mind, though very rarely communicated, to different individuals of his friends, or acquaintance. What those circumstances, and who those persons were, has, in some cases, been explained in the notes to the new edition; and there is no doubt, I imagine, but that the knowledge of this must occasion the poems to be read with a more lively interest, than if the author's fancy alone had dictated what he has written.

A third remark I wish to make, is, that, according to my judgment, the author has displayed, throughout, or with very few exceptions, great choice, correctness, and purity,

both of style and versification; and that his measures, and the interchange of his rhymes, are rich, and varied, without pedantry, or affectation; while his language holds a middle place, between the recondite phraseology of some, and the homely and prosaic simplicity of other, modern poets.

To these observations, all favourable to the author, but which I hope the reader of genuine taste will not see reason to impute to any overstrained partiality, I will add the notice of what I fear is to be considered as a blemish; I mean the too frequent recurrence of images and illustrations founded on the comparison of life to a voyage at sea, of unruly passion to a storm, and so forth. It is true, these images are, in general, happily diversified, both in language and application. Yet still, though differently attired, they may be thought to be introduced too

often. It is true, also, that a similar objection might be made to the first, and greatest of all poets. But the excuse which the great length of the Iliad, and Odyssey, naturally suggests, will not be admitted in the present case. A more fit example, (if example could justify,) might be found, in the writings of Metastasio, and even in his lesser poems; for, in all, the similies of a voyage, a ship, and a pilot, are constantly presenting themselves.

But if candour must acknowledge this to be a fault, it is surely of little weight when placed against the many excellencies these poems possess, and which, taking all their merits together, are, in my mind, distinguished, in a peculiar degree, by such a sweetness of thought, versification, and language, as fairly to entitle the author to the application of the passage from Homer, which I have written under his por-

trait, and in the title-page to the new edition.

That the circumstance I have ventured to blame, did not proceed from any sterility of imagination, might be proved by many other poetical compositions of the author which I possess, in manuscript, some of considerable length, and in a style quite different from those here printed. Some of them, I may, on a future occasion, be inclined to publish. Indeed, such was the versatility of his mind, that, though the following poems are chiefly of a serious cast, he had the greatest facility in extempore burlesque, and epigrammatic verses, which, for the amusement of the moment, he would readily make, and repeat, in times of mirth and gaiety, but yet still on the condition, that they were not to be copied, or preserved. In truth, the turn of his conversation, especially in his ear-

lier days, was wit and pleasantry, rather than discussion and sentiment; which he thought fitter for the closet and retirement, than for the convivial intercourse of society.

THE following inscription, on Major and Mrs. Mercer, engraved on a plain tablet of white marble, (the words in Italics having been written by himself,) is placed, near where they are interred, against the wall of the principal church, in New Aberdeen.

"Near this Place are deposited,
The Remains of
JAMES MERCER, Esquire, of ACHNACANT,
And of
KATHERINE DOUGLAS, his Wife."

"*Happy in their Union here,*
They cherished the Hopes of Happiness hereafter."

"James Mercer was Born 27th February, 1733, O.S.
And Died 27th November, 1804.
Mrs. Mercer was Born 8th April, 1743, O. S.
And Died 3d January, 1802.
They were Married 13th September, 1763."

"In Affectionate Remembrance of
A much beloved Brother and Sister,
This Stone is placed here, by
SYLVESTER DOUGLAS, LORD GLENBERVIE."

"1805."

Besides this simple inscription, the Editor having had occasion to inform Mr. Hayley, of Major Mercer's death, and to acquaint him, at the same time, that he had sunk under his grief for the loss of Mrs. Mercer; the ready and fertile muse of that amiable writer, supplied

him with the following pathetic, and appropriate epitaph, which, though inserted in Sir William Forbes's Work, I cannot refuse myself the pleasure of transcribing here:—

"Around this grave, ye types of merit, spread:
Here MERCER shares the Sabbath of the Dead!
Ye laurels, here, with double lustre bloom,
To deck a Soldier's, and a Poet's tomb!
Gracefully pleasing in each manly part!
His Verses, like his Virtues, win the heart:
Grateful for wedded bliss, (for years his pride!)
He lost it, and, by fond affliction, died.
Here, Sculpture! fix thy emblematic dove,
To grace the Martyr of connubial Love!
Hail! ye just Pair! in blest re-union rise!
Rever'd on earth! rewarded in the skies!"

Pleasantry, June 4, 1806.

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LYRIC POEMS.

TO

NOVELTY.

For thee, in infancy, we sigh,
And hourly cast an anxious eye
Beyond the prison-house of home;
Till, from domestic tyrants free,
O'er the wide world, in search of thee,
Fair Novelty! we roam.

Full on thy track, by dawn of day,
The stripling starts, and scours away,
While Hope her active wing supplies,
And softly whispers in the gale,
At ev'ry turning of the vale,
"Enjoyment onward lies."

Nor far remote,—athwart the trees,
The landscape opens by degrees,
And yields sweet glimpses of delight;—
Beyond the trees the views expand,
And all the scenes of fairy land
Come swelling on the sight.

'Tis here, where wild profusion flows;
On ev'ry shrub there hangs a rose,
And mellow fruit on ev'ry spray;—
Here Pleasure holds her bounteous reign,
And here the wand'rer might remain,
Could Pleasure bribe his stay.

But still the love of Thee prevails:—
He quits the port, and spreads his sails,
Careless if Ocean frown or smile;
So Fate shall give him to explore
The vast expanse, th' untrodden shore,
And undiscover'd isle.

Tir'd with the stillness of the deep,
While yet he chides the winds that sleep,
The clouds collect, the lightnings play;
And the torn vessel drives at last,
A wreck, abandon'd to the blast,
And foundering on her way.

Again the vext horizon clears,—
The hills emerge,—the coast appears;—
He and his mates their mirth renew;
They man their boats, their oars they hand,
And soon the hospitable strand
Receives the jolly crew.

What in th' interior parts befell,
In after-times we hear them tell,
When they at last their limbs recline
The tongue, well pleas'd, its office plies,
And all the while, their brimful-eyes
With dews of transport shine.

The happy natives they extol,
Their song, their dance, and festive bowl;
The fruitful soil, and balmy air,—
" And O!—the daughters of the land!
" Nature now works with niggard hand,
" And forms no maids so fair."

While thus, with pleasing warmth, they boast
Their gay excursions on the coast,
Where all seem'd brilliant, all divine;
The fond adventurers little know
It was thy pencil gave the glow,
The vivid charm was thine.

For when thy short-liv'd reign is o'er,
The fairest forms enchant no more,—
In listless apathy we gaze;
And Nature's face is wrapt in gloom,
Should all her vernal flow'rets bloom,
And all her jewels blaze.

Ah me! beyond thy short-liv'd reign,
And does there nought of love remain?—
Can nought the sluggish heart engage?
Shall ev'ry joy with thee decay,
And Heav'n afford no parting ray
To gild the hours of age?

Heav'n still is kind.—When thou art fled,
Comes gentle Habit, in thy stead,
With silent pace;—nor comes in vain:—
For, growing with declining years,
The good man's comforts she endears,
And softens ev'ry pain.

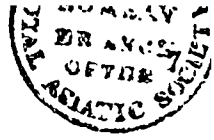
Where she, sweet sober maid, abides,
Contentment at the board presides;
No vagrant wish her vot'ry stings:—
In his own grounds he loves to tread;
Nor envies, on his household bed,
The couch of eastern kings.

No meteors play,—no mists arise;—
Wean'd from thy love, we learn to prize
Firm faith and long-experienc'd truth;
And now thy freaks and follies end,
In EMMA* I regain the friend
And charmer of my youth.

Obsequious now to Love's command,
I seize my EMMA's yielding hand;—
In her I grasp my joy, my pride;
And still deplore the tasteless hour,
When thy unhallow'd charms had pow'r
To tempt me from her side.

---

* Mrs. Mercer.



LA

MALADIE DU PAYS.

"SINCE Fortune thus has swell'd my store
"With cloudless gems and genuine ore;
"And all within my grasp I see
"That renders mortals blest and free;
"Why should I drag a willing chain?
"In life's decline, why still remain
"The wretched sport of hopes and fears?
"Why linger on this burning strand,
"A stranger to my native land
"For more than twenty tedious years?"

Near Ganges' flood, bereav'd of health,
Sated with luxury and wealth,
One who had shar'd in India's spoil,
Thus inly mourn'd his fruitless toil;
Till, as his restless fancy flew,
Homewards a longing look he threw,—
The prospect charm'd his ills away:
He felt,—on his awaken'd soul
A thousand soft ideas stole,
And Nature re-assum'd her sway.

From Asiatic pomp and pride
In that fond hour he turn'd aside,
To recollect his father's cot:—
O! could he gain that peaceful spot,—
Could he but catch the healthful breeze,
Reclin'd secure amid the trees
That near his native village grew,—
Or tread once more the playful green,

He thought the beauties of the scene
Would all his early joy renew.

In that fond hour, from Rapine's crew,
With just remorse, he backwards drew:—
The partners of his infant play,
His friends in life's advancing day,
The lovely maids he left behind,
Rose freshly pictur'd in his mind:—
O! could he join the happy train;
With them perhaps he yet might share
The only blessing worth his care,—
To love, and be belov'd again!

But when, at last, with hoarded store,
Safe landed on the British shore,
He posted to the lov'd retreat,
And sought for childhood's blithesome seat,
His father's cot in ruin lay;

The plough had swept the green away;
Rude hands had laid the timber low!
That luckless morn, the welkin lower'd,
And the blast down the valley scour'd
From hills, in summer, clad with snow.

At once the buds of promise die,
The prospect alters in his eye;—
The faded fair with scorn he sees;
His drooping friends no more can please;
The rising race, too hardy grown,
Nor court his smile, nor fear his frown;
And straight he cries:—"Why tarry here,
"Where misery deforms the plain;
"Where pride and rustic manners reign,
"And savage winter rules the year?"

To thy complaints, however weak,
Vain man! let Truth her dictates speak:—

" Though now thy dream of bliss be fled,—
" A dream by sickly fancy bred;
" Cease to revile our homely swains;
" Some latent worth this land contains:
" Respect the simple and sincere,
" And at the climate chide no more;—
" Can he who prowl'd on Asia's shore,
" Live innocent and happy here?"

THE

CASTLE IN THE AIR.

To .....

WHEN Pyrrhus, in his youthful hour,
First grasp'd at universal pow'r,
He thus bespoke his warlike train:
"Prepare, my friends, to cross the main;
"Prepare ye, now, for hardy blows:
"Assur'd, when I have quell'd my foes,
"That all shall swim in full delight;—
"Our future hours shall all be gay,
"Convivial mirth shall crown the day,
"And love endear the night!"

His friend, who at his folly sigh'd,
CINEAS, a sober sage, reply'd:
" Indulgent prince! if that be all,
" Your floating armaments recall:
" For sure, 'tis vain to search afar,
" And face the cruel storms of war,
" For fruits that bless your native soil:
" Women and wine are still at hand,
" Their ready joys you now command:—
" Why purchase them with toil?"

'Twas wisely said:—and you and I
Th' important lesson should apply:—
For, in the busy walks of life,
While we encounter noise and strife,
And ev'ry effort madly strain
For Honour's prize, or paltry gain,
Th' unsettled mind no comfort knows;
And still we languish for the hour

When we may laugh at Fortune's power,
And live in sweet repose.

If that be all, why further roam?
This vale affords a peaceful home;—
Across our path no crowds appear:
No barb'rous clamour rages here:
The bleating flocks, the murm'ring rill,
The shepherd piping on the hill,
The birds in full assembled quire,
And all the vocal woods around,
Where echo sports with ev'ry sound,
Arcadian dreams inspire.

O! for a well-selected band,
To people this delightful land!—
Ye faithful friends! whom we approve,
And ye! the damsels whom we love;—
All ye who tender hearts retain,

The favour'd and the slighted swain!
Romantic maids, and wishing brides!
From ev'ry region gather round:
For here the secret spot is found,
Where Happiness resides.

Methinks! already at my call,
In fair array, I see them all,
Eager to gain her blest abode,
Come hast'ning down the hilly road;
They reach the plain,—they cross the brook,—
They settle in each shady nook:—
Hark! how they carol through the grove!
While, busy at their pleasing care,
Like little birds they fondly pair,
And build, and live for love.

The hamlets rise, and I foretell,
Our colony will prosper well:

It needs no legislator's art;
Our laws are written on the heart.
In conscious innocence secure,
And from the word's contagion pure,
Our gentle duties we fulfil;
And reap the bliss our vale bestows,
Without a single thought on those
Who live beyond the hill.

But you, my friend, deride my strain;
And I myself confess 'tis vain,—
'Tis vain to search for tranquil bow'rs,
For devious paths bestrew'd with flow'rs;
For summer seas, where we may sail,
Still favour'd by a friendly gale:—
Life rolls in a tempestuous stream,
And we, by sad experience, find
That labour is the lot assign'd,
And rest an idle dream.

TO

THE TRIFLER.

AWAY with this unmeaning strain!
No more of luckless stars complain;
No more thy blasted hopes deplore,
Thy humble lot, and scanty store:—
Resume, my friend, thy thoughtless glee;
Renounce thy wild, ill-founded claim:
The paths that lead to wealth and fame,
Alas! were never trod by thee.

Ambition's heights, how couldst thou gain,
Exempt from labour, care, and pain?
Or idly hope, in Morpheus' bowers,
For ripening rays and golden show'rs?
Give plodding Industry her due;
Let those, whose hands improve the soil,
Reap the full produce of their toil,
And thou thy pleasing dreams pursue.

Still fond and fickle in thy dreams,
Still panting after wild extremes,
Now at the trumpet's martial sound,
Thy youthful heart was wont to bound;
Glory's wide field thy fancy fir'd:
And now the peasant's peaceful lot,
His simple fare, his humble cot,
Were all thy pensive soul requir'd.—

Ere long the pensive spirit flies;
Behold thee, provident and wise,
On gainful voyage intent to sail,
While storms and adverse winds prevail.—
But, should the winds propitious prove,
Let others stem the wat'ry way;—
For thou hast sworn at setting day,
To meet thy CHLOE in the grove.—

From CHLOE's thraldom 'scap'd at last,
And eager to redeem the past;
Resolv'd that here thy freaks shall end,
Thou com'st to me, thy sober friend,
Willing to know what I advise;—
And I advise the best I can:—
"Adopt, at length, a serious plan,
"And, persevering, hope to rise."

But soon my words are lost in air.
And recent tidings banish care:
For now the social board is set,
The sons of pleasure all are met;
And at the news I hear thee say:
"A truce to thy sententious song!
"Thy grievous lessons are too long,
"And life too quickly flies away."

THE

ELOPEMENT.

ONE morning young COLIN, the poorest of those
Who fight, and are shot at for sixpence a day,
Plann'd a prudent retreat, ere his landlord arose,
And, without beat of drum, sallied forth on his way.

Thro' the gloom I perceiv'd him come over the lawn,
And, arm in arm with him, a Shepherdess frail.—
Who may this be? thought I;—when a glimpse of the dawn
Betray'd her:—'Twas MARY, the pride of the vale.

Unprepar'd for such friends, at that hour of the day,
I stood mute, like a statue, while past me they flew;
And all too intent on their journey were they,
To wish me good-morrow, or bid me adieu.

They vanish'd :—and after them, fleet as the wind,
Follow'd MUNGO, to peep at the fugitive pair.—
'Ye know him, a mortal for mischief design'd ;
The scorn of the men, and the scourge of the fair.

Returning at noon, to delight his compeers,
And raise a loud laugh in the village, he strove :
But nature prevail'd ;—and the story drew tears,
Though told by a foe to compassion and love.

I heard him :—He told how he lurk'd on their way,—
In a style of his own, that was flippant and vain ;—
And to you, my sweet damsels ! suffice it to say,
That the lovers mov'd on, till they quitted the plain :

When, breathless and faint, and with sorrow opprest,—
" Dear COLIN ! is this the compassion you show ?
" Stop a moment !" she cried ;—" on this hill let me rest,
" And take a last look of the valley below."

COLIN stopp'd at her call;—and the fresh springing gale,
As she turn'd, on the cheek of the Shepherdess blew;
The sun just arising illumin'd the vale,
And the lodge of her father lay full in her view!

At the sight, ye may judge what emotions arose;
She swore to return;—at her COLIN she rail'd:
But their way they resum'd:—and I need not disclose
By what arts, and what reasons, the Soldier prevail'd.

Since that hour, that sad hour, in the depths of the grove,
Remote from the village, her fate I deplore;
I shut my fond heart to th' approaches of love,
And in woman I dream of perfection no more.

TO

THE GRACES;

ON READING LORD CHESTERFIELD'S LETTERS.

HANDMAIDS of BEAUTY! Ye who move
In airy measures round her throne,
And scatter on the paths of Love,
'Idalian roses, newly blown:
To you, ye gentle GRACES! say,
What homage shall a Briton pay?
No Lydian notes we Britons know;—
I search o'er all the plain
For flow'rs to strew your fane:
Few are the native flow'rs our climes bestow.

The sons of Greece, whose taste divine
Felt and ador'd whate'er was fair;
High in their temples rear'd your shrine,
And thither bade your steps repair.
Ye heard their vows;—that happy hour,
The soft'ning marble felt your pow'r;
The canvass glow'd with living fire;
The lover saw you glance
Along the mazy dance,
And more than mortal music swell'd the choir.

With wreaths, from hills where laurels grow,
Ye crown'd the MUSE, (immortal maid!)
Or in the myrtle bow'r below,
Round CYTHEREA fondly play'd:—
And while your dextrous fingers strove
To deck her in the garb of love,
From each light touch, a charm ensu'd;

Ye plac'd her magic zone;
In all her charms she shone,
And, conscious of her worth, the world subdu'd.

All learn'd to love.—Your empire spread
O'er classic shores, and classic isles;—
The fierce, the sordid passions fled,
And sacred VIRTUE wore your smiles.—
Till then, afar, in rustic cell,
Coy and severe, she lov'd to dwell:—
To PLATO's grove ye led the dame;—
She less reluctant grew,—
Your hands her veil withdrew,
And heroes, patriots, sages, caught the flame.

They breathe no more:—On parting wing
Ye saw the stars of GREECE expire.—
Teach me, ye Pow'rs! to shift the string,

And touch the sorrows of the lyre:
For now, amid her mould'ring urns,
GREECE, in maternal anguish, mourns
The wrecks of that ill-fated day,
When her affrighted land
Beheld a barb'rous band,
Who ne'er enjoy'd your smiles, nor felt your sway.

And now, while o'er your ancient home
The Despot's bloody falchion waves;
In alter'd guise I see you roam
Through lands that swarm with polish'd slaves.—
In soft AUSONIA's tuneful bow'rs,
Or where the SEINE her tribute pours,
In Fashion's borrow'd gems ye glare:—
And this, your courtly toil;
To catch the Monarch's smile,
And fix the suffrage of the wav'ring Fair.

STANHOPE, who strove to form the Great,
And mould anew our stubborn swains,
Woo'd you to fix your lasting seat
In the blest isle where Freedom reigns;
Come then! in Freedom's incense share;—
Come, gentle sisters!—but prepare
To serve in Virtue's cause once more:
Abjure the Siren's art;
To truth your aid impart;
Or turn ye from this heav'n-protected shore.

TO

MR. D*.....

No more the clouds of Winter lower;
At Spring's returning ray
They melt, and in the glist'ning shower
The tempest dies away.
From the green turf impregn'd with dew,
The new-born flow'rets start to view;
Fresh fragrance meets us in the plain;—
The peopled woods around
Wild melody resound,
And life, and love, and joy, resume their reign.

* The Editor.—Written in 1775.

O thou! in pictur'd mantle drest,
The harbinger of joy;
Whose promise calms the troubled breast,
When present ills annoy;
To where my D..... droops with care,
In this soft hour, sweet Hope, repair;
And paint the future prospect gay.—
Wave but thy magic wand,
And Sorrow's twilight band
Flits at the sudden gleam of orient day.

Tell him:—But ah! sweet Hope!—no more
He heeds thy pleasing strain:—
Credulity's fond days are o'er,
And Reason holds the rein;
On thee she turns an eye severe;
Bids thee thy blandishments forbear.—
"Cease, cease," she cries, "thy syren tale;

" Hence with thy treach'rous smiles,
" Thy meretricious wiles:
" Hence! hence! and youth's unguarded breast assail."

O then, let Friendship's sacred pow'r
Her soothing voice essay!
Her chaplet bears no baneful flow'r,
No guile her smiles betray:—
In her full eye, methinks, I view
The gentle EMMA's tender blue:—
Where soft congenial sorrows flow,
She takes her anxious stand,
Pours all her balsams bland,
And, when she cannot heal, she shares the woe.

Yet why should fiction deck the lay,
That strives to touch the heart?—
With Fancy's childish dreams away!
Ye airy forms, depart!—

Thy friend, my D.....! who has borne
The wildest freaks of fortune's scorn,
Bids thee thy native force display,
Thy gloomy fears forego:—
Though adverse breezes blow,
Still, still, the vig'rous pinion wins its way.

TO

SYMPATHY.

BLEST angel! from the Godhead's shrine,
Still wing'd on purposes benign,
To cherish love's eternal ties,
And breathe the spirit of the skies:
Through Nature's works, thy strong control
Pervades, unites, and binds the whole;
The boist'rous elements agree;—
And all the ravish'd eye can trace
Of order, symmetry, and grace,
Mysterious SYMPATHY! results from thee.

Nor less the task to thee assign'd,
To touch and harmonize the mind :—
A time there was, the sages say,
When Reason's spark inactive lay;
When man, a wretched recreant born,
Lurk'd in the pathless woods forlorn;
To grov'ling appetites a slave :—
If such in his primeval hour;
It was thy charm, auspicious Pow'r!
That drew the shudd'ring savage from his cave.

Impell'd by thee, with eager pace,
He hied him to his kindred race :—
In awkward guise, he first express'd
The new-born transport of his breast;—
At length the stream of language flow'd,—
With smiles his op'ning visage glow'd;
A soft intelligence began;

Th' assembling tribe their station chose,
Love's infant colony arose,
And plenty, joy, and freedom, dwelt with man.

In plenty blest, the village train
Met jocund on the neighb'ring plain:
Rough was their pastime, wild the roar:—
But soon the pastime pleas'd no more;
No more the plain with clamour rung;
On Wisdom's lip thy magic hung:
Through the fond ear persuasion stole,
And the Muse, melting o'er her lyre,
Pursu'd thy mood on ev'ry wire,
And hit the happy notes that reach'd the soul.

'Twas silent joy, 'twas soft surprise,—
Till the loud trumpet rent the skies,
And danger's threat'ning hour display'd

The worth that ripen'd in the shade:
For, while the fierce alarum blew,
To arms the hardy natives flew—
Onward in steady march they came,
Resistless, that decisive day,
When link'd by thee, their firm array
Crush'd the proud tyrant in the field of fame.

But far, far distant from the roar
Redoubling on the crowded shore,
Deep in the windings of the vale,
Brush'd only by the whisp'ring gale;
Amid the pure consenting choir,
Thy sacred energies inspire
Whate'er of heav'nly bliss we know:
For, thine is faith's unclouded beam;
Thine is the saint's ecstatic dream;
And thine, all thine, the good man's friendly glow.

O! deign to come, celestial Pow'r!
An inmate to thy suppliant's bow'r:—
And ne'er may cold corroding care
The flavour of thy fruits impair;—
But while, through life, the selfish stray,
Lonesome and joyless on their way;
To those I love for ever dear,
Th' uncertain hours may I beguile,
Still cherish'd by thy cordial smile,
Or sooth'd, in sorrow, by thy balmy tear.

TO

.....*

THOUGH many a tedious year has roll'd away,
Since last we parted on a foreign shore,
My fancy still beholds thee, young and gay,
Warm, gen'rous, and ingenuous, as before.

Yet where, with retrospective eye, we range,
Alas! full many a doleful change we see:—
Say, with thy wonted candour say, what change
Has wonder-working time produc'd in thee?

Do added years a cold reserve bestow,
Thy spirit's sprightly measures to control?
Does added wisdom cloud thy open brow,
Or added wealth contract thy lib'ral soul?

* Sir James (Norcliffe) Innes, Bart.

O ! would'st thou, as in youth, to latest age,
Thy worth, and best attractive charm, retain ;
While solemn mummers fill the busy stage,
Just to thyself, my friend ! thyself remain.

For why should Art's fantastic tints be laid
On those fine features they can ne'er improve ?
And why should mean disguise presume to shade
The fair defects that best conciliate love ?

'Twas not in sly Discretion's narrow school
Thy manners caught the happier art to please ;—
A foe to every dull punctilious rule,
Thy law was nature, and thy charm was ease.

Far o'er the bounds by formal fools devis'd,
With a bold negligence thy spirit flew :—
The world thy faults forgave, thy virtues priz'd,
And smil'd indulgent ere thy riches grew.

In early life, charm'd with thy frolic feats,
From watchful eyes and grave advice I stole;—
Happy we met in joy's obscure retreats,
And seal'd our friendship o'er the flowing bowl.

That sacred rite, my friend! we ne'er belied;—
In deeds of amity, for years, we strove;
Sworn brothers, in the field of danger tried *,
And gen'rous rivals in CORINNA's love.

Heedless of all that fortune's smiles could bring,
Our unambitious wishes we possess'd;
How rich! if riches from enjoyment spring;—
How wise! if wisdom teach us to be blest.

* They served together in Germany during the Seven years' war.

TO

A FOUNTAIN.

SEQUESTER'D Fountain*! ever pure!
Whose placid streamlet flows,
In silent lapse, through glens obscure,
Where timid flocks repose;
Tir'd and disabled in the race,
I quit ambition's fruitless chase,
To shape my course by thine;
And, pleas'd, from serious trifles turn,
As thus, around thy little urn,
A votive wreath I twine.

---

* Near a then retired villa, called *Bairn's Hall*, in the vicinity of Aberdeen; where the author resided several years.

Fair Fountain! on thy margin green,
May tufted trees arise,
And spreading boughs thy bosom screen
From Summer's fervent skies;—
Here may the Spring her flow'rets strew,
And Morning shed her pearly dew;
May health infuse her balm;
And some soft virtue in thee flow,
To mitigate the pangs of woe,
And bid the heart be calm.

O! may thy salutary streams,
Like those of LETHE's spring,
That bathe the silent land of dreams,
Some drops oblivious bring:—
With that blest opiate in my bowl,
Far shall I from my wounded soul
The thorns of spleen remove;—

Forget how there at first they grew,
And, once again, with man renew
The cordial ties of love.

For, what avails the wretch to bear
Imprinted on his mind,
The lessons of distrust and fear,
Injurious to mankind?—
Hopeless in his disastrous hour,
He sees the gath'ring tempest lower,
The bursting cloud impend;—
Tow'rds the wild waste he turns his eye,
Nor can that happy port descry,—
The bosom of a Friend.

How chang'd since that propitious time,
When, woo'd by fortune's gale,
Fearless in youth's advent'rous prime,

He crowded ev'ry sail!—
The swelling tide, the sportive breeze,
Lightly along the halcyon seas
His bounding pinnace bore;—
In search of happiness, the while,
He steer'd by ev'ry fragrant isle,
And touch'd at ev'ry shore.

Ah me! to Youth's ingenuous eye
What charms the prospect wears!—
Bright as the portals of the sky
The op'ning world appears:—
There every figure stands confest,
In all the sweet advantage drest
Of Candour's radiant robe;—
There no mean cares admission find:
Love is the business of mankind,
And Honour rules the globe.

But if those glêams fallacious prove
That paint the world so fair;
If heav'n has plac'd for gen'rous love
No soft asylum there;
If men fair faith, fair fame deride,
Bent on the crooked paths that guide
To int'rest's sordid shrine;
Be yours, ye gloomy sons of Woe!
That melancholy truth to know;
The dream of bliss be mine!

THE

VISIONARY.

FANCY! thou changeful maid,
Now in dark weeds array'd,
And now in all the hues of orient light;
While Reason slumb'ring lay,
Ere yet the golden ray
Of Science pierc'd the gloom of gothic night,
Hell's inauspicious meteors round thee blaz'd,
And pallid Fear crouch'd low, and shudder'd as he gaz'd.

Th' uncultivated shore
No lively scen'ry wore:—
No voice from festive hamlet cheer'd the plain:—
Smote by thy with'ring pow'r,
At midnight's murky hour,
The pilgrim call'd his drowsy saints in vain;
Nearer and nearer still the spectre drew,
And in the sullen blast the mutt'ring demon flew.

But lo! the night is o'er,—
The demon roams no more;—
Resume thy smiles, and meet me on the lawn;—
To wake the forms of joy
Thy milder spells employ,
And to my classic rites, at op'ning dawn,
Bring the sweet sylvan pow'rs whose haunts I love,
The Naiad of the stream, and Dryad of the grove.

Or if in distant bow'r,
Till ev'ning shadows low'r,
The nightingale's full notes prolong my stay;
Thy sportive tricks pursue,
And bid the dapper crew
On my returning path innoxious play;—
While elfin lamps in every thicket shine,
And the long lane resounds with minstrelsy divine.

With Fancy's dreams, in vain,
Would I beguile my pain;—
At eve I tread her soothing walks no more;—
But in the dreary isle
Of this dismantled pile,
With frantic search, the hallow'd round explore;
Since the sad hour that snatch'd a blooming maid
From love's delighted eye, to death's impervious shade.

O'er her untimely grave,
Where noisome thistles wave,
Where ruin gathers from the mould'ring wall;
While memory prompts my tear,
Does CLARA hover near?—
Does the surviving spirit hear me call?—
Or rests she in the cold oblivious deep,
To cheerless gloom consign'd, and everlasting sleep?

Before my dazzled eyes
What strange illusions rise!—
'Tis she! 'tis she! that form divinely fair;—
That messenger of love
Who beckons from above!—
Th' angelic vision mounts, and melts in air,
By choral voices welcom'd on her way,
Through yon bright track that streams unsufferable day.

THE

EVENING WALK.

O THOU! to pity's kind affections true,
Of Varro thou hast heard, the good, the wise!
Onward, my EMMA;—and the spot we view
Where his forsaken seat in ruin lies.

How dead the path! across the bord'ring woods,
On brushing wing, no active breezes play;
O'er the dank soil the heavy vapour broods,
And nature's wild luxuriance chokes the way.

By well-known scenes that sooth'd my youthful mind,
Through fields that in the pride of culture shone,
Sorrowing, I pass; and in my progress find
The fence demolish'd, and the vista flown.

But lo! the solitary castle nigh,
Whose halls nor inmate hold, nor guest invite;
Save yon ill-omen'd birds that perch on high,
Or round the turrets wheel their clam'rous flight.

The parting roof that loads these mould'ring walls,
Scarce yields a shelter from the drizzling show'r;
In at the shatter'd pane the ivy crawls,
And through the waste apartment weaves her bow'r.

Where peace, where pleasure dwelt, destruction prowls;
Where mirth was heard, and music wont to chime;—
Hark! how with sudden gust the tempest howls,
And flaps the jarring doors, unlock'd by time

How chang'd th' abode where VARRO lov'd to rest!
When, by his happier stars, from courts remov'd,
He liv'd, of fortune, kindred, friends, possest,
By men applauded, and by Heav'n approv'd.

Blest in himself, his bounty's warm embrace
Diffus'd the blessing o'er his wide domain;
For, one was he of that primeval race
Whose splendour shone propitious on the plain.

The hopes that cherish age were all his own;
The happy sire his gen'rous sons survey'd,
Who, to the blooming verge of manhood grown,
His worth reflected, and his love repaid.

Fall'n with the parent tree, in dust they lie:—
This mutilated mansion why explore?
Where Fancy rivets her distemper'd eye
On joys for ever past, and friends no more!

As through the storms of life our course we steer,
Still some lost comfort down the current goes:—
Turn, EMMA, turn! suppress the fruitless tear,
And reap the present good that Heaven bestows.

HOME,

To .....

THE Bandit whom the laws pursue,
The Soldier, and the Gypsey crew,
Arabs, and Tartars, ever doom'd to roam,—
Whate'er their place of shelter be,
A tent, a cave, or hollow treē,
Thither they hie with joy, and call it HOME.

There if a doxy, or a wife,
Receive the wretch escap'd from strife;
If there his tatter'd brood around him cling;—
His features catch a bright'ning smile,
He rests him from his sordid toil,
And in his narrow confines reigns a king.

While thus the poor and wretched find
Th' asylum for a wounded mind,—
Distemper'd men there are, estrang'd from home,
Cold to an angel's kind embrace,
Cheerless amid a blooming race,
And dead to comfort in a princely dome.

Men in the lap of Fortune nurst,
With all her froward humours curst,
And teas'd by wishes ever on the wing;
Who, wand'ring still through Folly's maze,
In search of bliss consume their days,
Nor taste her genuine draught at Nature's spring.

Yet such the men who lead the gay,
The pride and patterns of the day,
Whose high-priz'd friendship fools and strangers boast:—
Blush, thou! to court their barren fame;
Let HOME, sweet HOME, thy presence claim,
And those enjoy thy smiles, who love thee most.

TO

THE PARSON OF *.....

While courtly bards present their venal lays
Where fortune smiles and wealth unlocks her store,
My saunt'ring Muse along the hamlet strays,
And sings, unpension'd, at the good man's door.

---

* The Rev. John Lundie, minister of Lonmay in Aberdeenshire; an early and constant friend both of the Author and the Editor; whose Evangelical piety and virtue, cheerful and happy temper, and classical endowments, have procured him, through a long life, the love and esteem of all those, in the part of the world where his lot has been cast, who know how to appreciate such rare excellence as his.

But chief this quiet spot attracts her care,
Where dwells a priest, from pride and priestcraft free;
Too well his mansion's mould'ring walls declare,
That not of Levi's pamper'd sons is he.

Poor as the chosen children of the dust,
Who o'er the world with Heaven's glad tidings ran,
Meekly he bears his delegated trust,
The minister of God, the friend of Man.

But what avail him here his pious toil,
And the mild spirit that his zeal displays?—
On earth he labours in a barren soil,
And man with cold neglect his love repays.

Oft has th' enlighten'd saint essay'd in vain
To win my steps from error's dreary way;
Still, still I scoff'd at Reason's formal strain,
And turn'd me from her cold, penurious ray.

But now, for suff'ring virtue taught to sigh,
I start indignant from the sceptic's dream;
And, as I cast an anxious look on high,
The morning-star of hope begins to beam.

The day-light springs;—no more my doubts remain;
For hark! some cherub whispers through the grove:—
"When this short span is o'er, the just shall reign,
"And kindred spirits meet in lands of love."

THE

INVITATION.

Thou! who beyond my humble fold*
Pursu'st thy rapid way,
Far through the western pines behold
The setting orb of day.
Be warn'd;—avoid the coming night,
Nor by the crescent's dubious light
This dang'rous path explore;

* A small inclosure and house, beautifully situated, which the Author laid out and built, and which he called *Sunny Bank*. After occupying this pleasant villa during the last 12 or 14 years of their lives, both he and his wife died there.

For, woods and rocks obstruct the dale,
And hark! in ev'ry swelling gale,
The mountain torrents roar.

Bright with the blush of ev'ning skies,
Where yonder window glows,
A small, but friendly cot there lies,
The seat of calm repose;—
A roof that cheers my simple heart
More than the gorgeous domes of art
That with false splendour shine:—
Let not the sons of Pride reprove,
Or wonder at my partial love,—
I call the cottage mine.

If, in the lap of Fortune bred,
Thou view'st with scornful eyes

Th' inglorious lot and lowly shed
That I have learnt to prize;
To-night, within my peaceful door,
On Nature's sweet salubrious store
Thy sickly taste regale;
And from the banquet thou shalt know,
How pure the streams of pleasure flow
Through life's sequester'd vale.

TO

THE SPLENETIC.

OFTTIMES, my friend*! I hear thee say,—
" This gloomy district once was gay;
" This land the fruits of friendship bore,
" And welcome sat at ev'ry door;
" Each morn the happy neighbours met,
" And nightly parted with regret:

---

* George Moir, Esquire, of Scotstown, in the county of Aberdeen.

"But times are chang'd;—and blooming mirth,
"Friendship, and love, and all the pow'rs
"That mingled in our social hours,
"Are vanish'd from the earth."

While thus the child of spleen repines,
The sun in all his glory shines;
Peep from thy dungeon, and admire:—
Lo! in their holiday attire,
The young, the beautiful, and gay,
In pairs along the meadow stray;—
Why sit we here like churlish elves?
Cease, cease, my friend! thy peevish strain:
Things in their pristine course remain;
The change is in ourselves.

But, heedless of our own decay,
On fancied ills the blame we lay;
Like old ACASTO, who complains
That now eternal winter reigns.—
" Some years ago," ACASTO cries,
" How cloudless were our summer skies!
" Each morn we could our sports pursue;—
" And, oft as ev'ning drew her veil,
" I stroll'd with LUCY down the dale,
" Nor felt the chilly dew."

THE

PASTIME.

BENEATH thy banners, Queen of Love,
Behold thy hoary vet'ran move,
Unwilling to retire;
His wrinkles with thy myrtles hide,
Nor let thy youthful bands deride
His ineffectual fire.

With nerves unbrac'd and limbs decay'd,
Which no warm antidote can aid,
No magic can restore;
Still thy fond suppliant I incline,
And kiss with fervent lips the shrine,
Whose treasures I adore.

What though no more with tow'ring flames,
And youthful warmth, I urge the dames
Who grace thy blooming train?
Still some faint embers upwards move,
That fire with visionary love
The regions of the brain.

Nor ye, the serious and the wise,
Demurely blame me, while I prize
The service of the fair;
For who can deem my labour vain,
If with complacent smiles they deign
To crown my tender care?

There rests my unambitious aim;—
All frantic hopes, all further claim,
For ever I abjure;
Th' ungen'rous dotard I detest
Who strives to wound the gentle breast,
Without the balm to cure.

With DELIA as I pass the day,
Soft, inoffensive things I say;
That soothe her vacant heart;—
I touch the strings to love assign'd,
And gently form her op'ning mind
To play the woman's part.

How Love conducts his subtle snare,
And forms th' approach that wins the fair,
My practis'd lips explain;
And all the finer arts unfold,
By which her sex repels the bold,
Or fires the tim'rous swain,

Meanwhile with fond, officious care,
I smooth her robe, compose her hair,
By wanton winds carest;
And still assiduous in my trust,
With trembling hands I oft adjust
The nosegay in her breast.

As thus my charming task I ply,
I scorn the world's invidious eye,
And boast my careless ease;
Nor small the boast in life's decay,
That thus, with Fancy's youthful play,
I can be pleas'd and please.

ELEGY

ON THE DEATH OF A YOUNG BULLFINCH.

By Mr. D.....

FAREWELL, sweet bird! and art thou dead?
Thy voice extinct, thy spirit fled!—
O, loss! beyond repair!
Could nought avail? the tears of FAN?
Thy soft caresses, gentle ANN*?
Nor all my anxious care?

* The very amiable and accomplished person to whom these lines were addressed, was one of the earliest and most partial readers of most of the Poems in this Collection; the Editor having communicated them to her while they were yet in manuscript.

O! hadst thou, beauteous fool, 'divin'd
For what fair lot thou wast design'd,
What future bliss was near;
Thou hadst not then resign'd thy breath;
That thought had pow'r to vanquish death;
Thy heav'n, sweet bird! was here.

Thee, gentle ANN had call'd her own;
Her alabaster hand thy throne,
Her breast had been thy nest:
And sure a mistress so divine,
So tender and so fair as thine,
No bullfinch e'er possess'd.

But peace be with thy lovely shade!
Thy grave no plough shall e'er invade;
And each revolving year,
In silent grief, shall ANN and I,
While plaintive turtles murmur nigh,
Bedew thee with a tear.

TO THE

AUTHOR OF THE FOREGOING ELEGY,

UPON HIS PUBLICATION OF A LAW-BOOK.

WHILE deeply, in your serious page,
The learned and the wise engage,
I still pursue the way
That leads to Fancy's flow'ry seat,
And listen, as at U - - 's feet
You pour the glowing lay.*

And oft I visit ANNA's bow'r,
Where fairy bells, at midnight hour,
Struck sullen sounds of death;
What time the tyrant of the tomb
Remorseless smote the painted plume,
And stopp'd the tuneful breath.

* This refers to a Copy of Verses which had been communicated to the Author.

While ANNA for her bird complains,
While the lov'd songster's cold remains
Thy pious hands enshrine;
In sable vestments I appear,
And fondly mingle many a tear
With ANNA's tears and thine.

And lo! by thy sweet numbers led,
Th' obsequious turtles, o'er the dead,
Their bidden task fulfil:
But mark how they express their pain;—
Though sad, yet soothing is their strain,—
They murmur and they bill.

Then why thy fruitless tears employ?
With some ingenious change of toy
The fair one's grief assuage;
Arise, and search the thickets round,
Some curious bird may still be found
For gentle ANNA's cage.

TO

THE VINE.

WRITTEN IN FRANCE*.

ENCHANTRESS! to whose juice benign
Heav'n's golden dreams we owe;
Blest be the soil, ambrosial Vine!
In which thou deign'st to grow;—
And blest the tall supporting tree,
The bridegroom elm, that, clasp'd by thee,
Bears the gay trophies of thy love;—
Fruits, pendent in the gilding ray,
And floating foliage, round his spray,
In many a garland wove!

* Near Pons in Xaintonge, where the author and his family lived about two years, from 1774 to 1776.

O! may the natives of the land
The smiles of comfort share;
The swains, who, with laborious hand,
Thy liquid bliss prepare;
The med'cine, on my natal shore,
Amid the winter's dreary roar,
That renovates the drooping soul,—
Charms the heart's frozen mood away,
And bids the gleams of fancy play
Beneath the gloomy pole!

Now happy in a milder sky,
From chymic arts secure,
Fast by the fountain-head we lie,
And quaff the vintage pure:—
Fraught with fresh sweets the nectar flows,
Nor needs what mellowing age bestows:—
See where the ready goblets shine!
And mark, ye sons of taste! how bright,

How soft the fluid's purple light!
Its flavour how divine!

This precious store from vulgar view
My jealous walls shall hide;
And never shall its balm bedew
The sullen lip of Pride:—
But ye, my friends! whose manners join
In sympathetic warmth with mine,
For nobler, deeper draughts prepare;—
Let shouts of just applause resound,
For lo! my votive glass is crown'd
In honour of the fair.

Without a pilot, on the main,
Though now we bear away,
The port of reason we'll regain
By morn's returning ray:—
But O! ye festive pow'rs! to-night,
Prolong, exalt the keen delight,

Banish far hence the grave, the coy;
And ev'ry glowing guest provide
With a fair HEBE by his side,
To pledge the cup of joy.

THE

HUMDRUM COMPANION.

OFT as the day's dull labours end,
With gentle habit for my guide,
To* T.....'s quiet haunt I bend,
And place me by his ample side.—
Can this th' effect of philters be?—
Ah no! his sober smile
Acquits his heart of guile;—
Nor skill'd, I ween, in magic lore is he.

* This is a just and correct description of the personage, and of the sort of attraction which drew so often into his society a man of a character so different, notwithstanding the ironical insinuation to the contrary in the last line of this little poem.

'Twas not the god of wine, nor wit,
With gay convivial garlands crown'd,
Who first our bond of union knit;
For T..... holds this doctrine sound,—
That floods of wine engender strife;
And wicked wit, we know,
With empty noise and show,
Mars all the serious purposes of life.

It is not friendship's tender theme
That thus protracts our scanty bowls;
For little does the good man dream
Of the strange unison of souls.
Yet such my fond partiality;—
I shun the pert and vain,
And with this simple swain
I taste the joys of sweet equality.

THE

FAREWELL*.

To J. G.†

THE needy youth, compell'd to roam,
When first he quits his native home,
Gives rising sorrow to the wind;—
He leaves no precious pledge behind:—
Why like a dastard should he grieve?
No load hangs heavy at his heart,
His well-brac'd sinews play their part,
What may not he achieve?

* Written in the year 1793.

† Mr. James Alexander Gordon, a grandson of the Author; now a Captain in the Royal Navy.

From care and anxious foresight free,
In the first bark he trusts the sea:—
'Tis well if prosp'rous breezes play:—
Should fate arrest her on her way,
No partner in the freight she bore;
Amid the wreck a plank he gains,
And while the hurricano reigns,
I see him make the shore.

Whence, then, this foolish, fond delay?
Does sloth, or love, prolong thy stay?
The destin'd vessel rides in view:—
Go, face the hardships of the crew,
Nor at thy scanty stores repine:—
Who knows what time may yet unfold?
Or who are doom'd to share the gold
That ripens in the mine?

Fortune, I know, is blind and coy:—
Do thou the honest means employ;
Should she thy toils at length repay,
Then let the soft affections sway:—
Return, from vice and folly free;
And DELIA, with unfaded charms,
DELIA, my boy, shall bless thy arms,
Or one as fair as she.

THE

SAUNTERER.*

FULL of the dream of keen delight,
In youth a thousand toils we prove;
We climb ambition's fearful height,
And seek, thro' midnight gloom, the bow'r of love,
But with th' ensuing morn
The proffer'd bliss we scorn,
And throbs of new desire our rest annoy;
Distemper fires the veins,
The fev'rish thirst remains,
And passion's bitter dregs pollute the cup of joy.

---

* Written at the Author's house called Sunny Bank, about the year 1798.

Then happier far, in life's decay,
If neither gout nor stone assail;
If conscience, at the close of day,
With angel visitation bid us hail;
When frantic hopes are past,
We taste repose at last,
And reap sincere delight from homely cheer;
For, by the mossy cell,
Where quiet loves to dwell,
The streams of comfort rise, and run for ever clear.

Assembled round the social hearth,
When winter holds his rigid sway,
We share the fruits of temp'rate mirth,
Nor fail to charm the dreary hours away:—
And O! the joy that streams
Amid the coming gleams,
When blossoms ope, and birds are on the wing;
What time by music led,

The garden path I tread,
And meet the balmy breath of renovating spring.

But not to formal walks confin'd
While yet the jocund seasons reign,
I leave the garden-wall behind,
With all the green inclosures of the plain:
And sights, and sounds of joy,
My wand'ring steps decoy
Still further on, in quest of something new;
Till, past the bushy rill,
I mount yon shelving hill,
Where distant spires are kenn'd, and ocean rolls in view.

There, as on Rapture's dazzled eye
The wonders of creation throng,
Devotion wakes, and wafts a sigh
To tracts beyond the limits of my song;
Till, fir'd by growing heat,

I quit the lofty seat,
And hide me from the sun's meridian glare,
Down in some elfin nook,
Beside the pebbly brook,
Whose sound incessant brings forgetfulness of care.

Let sullen fools for ever hide;—
At ev'n I gain the peopled road;
Or, led by friendship, turn aside,
To greet my neighbour in his thatch'd abode.
With him I pace the fields,
Learn what his harvest yields,
And see his children pass in playful drove;
I know the urchins all;—
On me by name they call,
And flatter wrinkled age with many a mark of love.

As thus my daily rounds I go,
Still some kind office breeds delay;—

My mite with pleasure I bestow,
To cheer the wand'ring beggar on his way:
And should the buxom lass,
Of yonder hamlet pass,
Fresh, blooming, and of harmless favours free;
Safe from her roguish smile,
I hand her o'er the stile,
And pray that she may meet with livelier lads than me.

RELIGION.*

RELIGION! heav'nly maid!
Who lends't thy willing aid,
To bear the Pilgrim on his thorny way;—
Whose light, athwart the gloom,
That saddens o'er the tomb,
Gives the sweet promise of a future day;
In vain the savage foes of man conspire,
To shake thy stable throne, and quench thy hallow'd fire.

* Written in the year 1793.

For tho' on summer seas
Th' adventurer courts the breeze,
Nor heeds thy warning voice while sirens sing;
In life's declining hour,
When clouds begin to low'r,
And hopes fallacious vanish on the wing;
What guidance shall he trust but thine alone,
Appall'd by coming night, and on a coast unknown?

When reft of ev'ry stay,
He sees them swept away,
Whom love and friendship in his fortunes join'd;
What time with streaming eyes,
He mourns the sever'd ties,
That ardent youth first fasten'd on the mind;
To whose kind counsel shall the wretch attend,
But thine, that ever breathes the fervour of a friend?

Let philosophic pride
Our fears and woes deride,
And arm the callous breast in stubborn steel;
Thy lips a wisdom teach
Beyond the Stoic's reach;—
Thy votaries learn to triumph while they feel;—
With sober joy receive the boons that flow,
And bless the chast'ning hand that deals th'afflictive blow.

O maid! for ever mild,
Sweet Mercy's darling child!
May those who plead thy cause, thy spirit share!
For in the hermit's cell,
Should hate or envy dwell,
Should pride, or blind presumption enter there,
What boots the suppliant voice, the bended knee?
He follows faithless guides, and wanders far from thee.

REFLECTIONS

BY

A FATHER*.

Tho' sweet the breath of vernal hours,
When garlands hang on ev'ry thorn,
When ev'ry path is strew'd with flow'rs,
And opening rose-buds greet the morn;—
Who knows what blasts may yet arise:
However sweet, however gay,
The blossom may our hopes betray;—
It is th' autumnal fruit, we prize.

* These reflections were dictated by domestic events; to which they allude in a manner very obvious, and very affecting, to the Author's relatives and connexions.

Alas! the same precarious fate
Attends on childhood's pleasing show;—
The parent views, with hopes elate,
His favourites round the table grow;
Who, lost to worth in riper years,
To duty lost may yet conspire,
To wring thy heart, unhappy sire!
And drench thy furrow'd cheek in tears.

While the poor child of homelier mien,
Who in the corner sits forlorn,
Sobs hourly at parental spleen,
And eats the bitter bread of scorn;
Untainted by the pamper'd crew,
And faithful to affection's call,
Perhaps, in his paternal hall,
Shall trim the lamp of joy anew.

But youth and manhood fairly past,
There still awaits a trying stage:
The latent vice may spring at last,
Baneful and rank in frozen age;
When he, who honour's semblance wore,
Forgetful of his better days,
Stoops from his pride as life decays
And pants for virtuous fame no more.

Perhaps the sordid love of gold
Contaminates the dotard's mind:
Perhaps, to friends and kindred cold,
Unjust, suspicious, and unkind,
He feeds a viper near his heart;
And sneaks unpitied to the grave,
The dupe of some obsequious knave,
Or wheedled by a strumpet's art.

O! may the star, beneath whose pow'r
I rose and ripen'd into man,
And 'scap'd in life's unguarded hour,
When on the verge of guilt I ran,
Kind, and propitious as before,
Prolong its heav'n-illumin'd ray
To guide me through the close of day,
And land me on a safer shore!

THE BIRD.

THE little Bird who ceas'd to sing,
And sat forlorn with drooping wing,
While winter's angry tempests blew;
On renovated plumes elate,
At spring's approach selects his mate,
And pours his native notes anew.
A sweet recess to love he builds,
Enjoys whate'er the summer yields,
Nor dreams that winter shall again ensue.

How happy in his narrow span!
How blest beyond the lot of man!
Who brooding ever on the past;
Who gall'd, through life, in thorny ways,
And sadden'd by disastrous days,
Despondent shudders in the blast:—
And should a gleam of joy appear,
Possest of all to fancy dear,
He still foresees, it will not, will not last.

But why the laws of Heav'n arraign?
Why of the lot of man complain?
His sov'reign balm is ever near;—
And while the tenants of the grove,
By winter's rage abridg'd of love,
Are lost to all their wonted cheer,
Man still can grasp his lovely prize,
Brave and surmount the changeful skies,
And gather fruits of love through all the year.

What then avails the feather'd throng,
Their fleeting bliss, their vernal song,
Their tie that can no blast abide!
Who, scar'd at famine's threat'ning day,
Disperse, and wing their separate way,
A partial pittance to provide:—
Ah! how unlike the human pair!
Who, blind to ev'ry selfish care,
Endure the suff'ring season side by side.

TO A LADY*

WHO PASSED SOME TIME IN A RETIRED PART OF THE COUNTRY, WHERE THE AUTHOR THEN RESIDED.

When first thou cam'st in beauty's pride,
With playful fancy for thy guide,
To reap the homage of our plain;
Allur'd by thy bewitching smile,
We simple swains forsook our toil,
And follow'd in thy train.
Thy lovely form, thy winning air,
Thy manners gay and debonnair,
Surpris'd the natives of the shore:
Nor could the young thy pow'r withstand,
When hoary heads, at thy command,
The cap of folly wore.

* Her Grace the Duchess of Gordon.

In honour of thy matchless mien,
We hail'd thee as our rural queen,
Join'd by the suffrage of the fair;
Who, flocking from the neighbouring bow'rs,
Prepár'd a diadem of flow'rs,
To bind thy floating hair.

With thee the soul of pleasure reign'd;—
No sigh was heard, no voice complain'd;
No sad, nor sullen looks were seen;—
All in their merry functions strove:—
'Twas endless piping in the grove,
Or dancing on the green.

But born to please in ev'ry mood,
Amid the lab'rinth of the wood,
Attended by a chosen few;
Oft would'st thou play a pensive part,
And speak the language of a heart,
To gentlest feelings true.

Oft would'st thou, as by Heaven inspir'd,
And of terrestrial follies tir'd,
Pause at each step, and moralize:—
Thy wisdom our attention rais'd;—
We fondly listen'd, fondly gaz'd:—
Judge thou! if we were wise.

Meanwhile, through paths bestrew'd with flow'rs,
Unmindful of the fleeting hours,
With thee we stray'd, till close of day:—
From scenes so secret and so sweet,
It was not easy to retreat —
It was unsafe to stay.

One evening, in the beechen shade,
Thy faithless lips a promise made,
To bide with us, and roam no more:—
A chilly wind ere morning blew;—
Away the bird of passage flew,
And sought another shore.

Long lost to us, in courts afar,
Thou gaily shin'st a leading star:—
The joys of courts let others tell;—
In lowly glens from envy free,
We live, and when we think of thee,
We sigh, and wish thee well.

STANZAS

WRITTEN IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

OF THE

LAKE OF KILLARNEY.

Ye damsels! who with cautious care
Avoid the broad meridian glare,
To please the prudent folks whom none can please;
While spies no more their station keep,
While busy tongues are tied by sleep,
And all is hush'd in silence, but the breeze
That whispers o'er the moon-illumin'd lake;—
For once our tender call obey,
Drop the disguise ye wear by day;
Come forth, and in our harmless sports partake.

Down in the creek a boat attends,
Well trimm'd and mann'd by chosen friends,
Who know to guide the helm, and ply the oar:
Besides, we boast a tuneful band,
Prepar'd to sail at your command,
And pour their melody along the shore;
Where sportive echo, at each closing note,
Starts, and replies from fairy ground,
Through all her mazes warbles round,
And breathes a last farewell in woods remote.

Thence tacking, with an easy sail
Our bark shall bear before the gale,
On a short visit to the neighbouring isles;—
Fit objects for the painter's eye,
In many a curious group they lie;
Each island in Elysian beauty smiles,
A well-set jewel in the wat'ry way,

A little, calm, secluded scene,
With thickets cloth'd, and paths between,
Where friends and lovers might for ever stray.

If we believe the current tales,
Strange is the witch'ry there prevails,
When troops of lads and lasses make the land;
For tho' they mean to sport and play,
In serious pairs they drop away,
Adown the shady paths on either hand;
Decoy'd and wilder'd long by magic art,
Till waking from illusion sweet,
All in some central glade they meet,
And laugh, and wonder how they came to part.

But fear not ye those idle tales;—
The pow'r of incantation fails
At the chaste presence of a wedded dame:
And she, the pattern of the wise,
Whom no sinister arts surprise,

Clelia*, with us, embarks her spotless fame:—
Join'd by her mate,—a well-selected pair;—
She, to preside with gentle sway,
And lead us in th' unerring way,—
And he, the joyous wight to banish care.

By the soft radiance of the moon,
With breathing instruments in tune,
As o'er the glassy lake our course we steer;
While souls in unison combine,
While innocence and freedom join,
And pensive pleasure blends with frolic cheer;
Attentive still to what the world may say,
Clelia, the judge of what is fit,
With calm observant eye shall sit,
And give due warning of th' approach of day.

* Mrs. D—k—s.

THE

ADVICE.

To thee, my fair! when all was new,
And the town open'd on thy view,
No limits could thy rambles bound;—
Thy steps tripp'd lightly o'er the ground,
That teems with fanciful delight;
For ever crowded, ever gay,
Where thought obtrudes not on the day,
And folly rings her larum through the night.

But now the novelty is o'er,
Thy frame sustains the toil no more;—
Fancy no more to pleasure wakes,
The rose of health thy cheek forsakes;—
Peevish, and pensive, art thou grown;—
And yet the cause that prompts thy sigh,
Why the tear gathers in thine eye,
Is to thyself, unhappy maid! unknown.

And here, alas! to soothe thy woes,
No plant of healing virtue grows;—
No gems of value here abound;
Where trifles, in eternal round,
The mind's degraded pow'rs employ:
For know that, to the female kind,
Heav'n has some serious tasks assign'd,
And 'tis in duty's path ye taste of joy.

Would'st thou thy faded bloom restore,
And be the girl thou wert before?
Hence, to thy native shades repair;—
Join in thy mother's household care;
Thy father's smiles, with smiles repay,
And all thy pristine calm retrieve,
Lull'd by the nightingale at eve,
And summon'd by the lark at opening day.

Sweet are the birds that haunt the grove,
And ah! how sweet, the voice of love:—
Haste then;—the birds already sing;
And 'mid the melody of spring,
Some youth, perhaps, of soul sincere,
Shall bid thee welcome to the vale,
And whisper a persuasive tale,
That blushing innocence may safely hear.

TO

A YOUNG MIDSHIPMAN,*

THE AUTHOR'S GRANDSON.

December 1798.

WHILE thy compeers, at school confin'd,
Plod o'er the weary task assign'd,
Or snatch the short-liv'd sweets of play
Enfranchis'd on some holiday;
Thine is, my boy! a manly game,
Doom'd by thy fate, on seas afar,
To wing the thunderbolt of war,
And share thy Country's fame.

* Now Captain J. A. Gordon.—See page 79.

Though distant from the busy stage,
And marr'd in ev'ry limb by age;
In fancy active, as before,
With thee, dear boy! I quit the shore;—
I trace thy course along the main;
And, on the confines of the grave,
Renew my commerce with the brave,
And live in thee again.

In Jervis' gallant navy bred,
On glory's track by Nelson led,*
Well may'st thou boast of storms sustain'd,
Of battles fought, and honour gain'd;
A partner in the recent toil,
When war's dread tempest onward bore,
And Europe echo'd with the roar,
That burst upon the Nile.

* Captain Gordon served as a Midshipman on board the Namur, Captain (now Admiral) Whitshed, in the engagement off Cape Saint Vincent, February 14, 1797; and on board the Goliath, Captain Thomas Foley, in the battle of the Nile, August 1, 1798.

'Twas then the worth of Britons shone;
Arriving on a coast unknown,
Plung'd in the gath'ring gloom of night,
All the dire terrors of the fight,
The persevering Briton braves;
Day springs at last,—the clouds divide;—
And o'er the foe's dismantled pride,
The flag of Britain waves.

The winds may blow, the billows roll;—
No farther fear alarms my soul:—
If thou possess a sailor's heart;
Though rude in ev'ry polish'd art,
If thou a sailor's worth display,
Thy hardy skiff shall stem the seas,
And Heaven afford a happy breeze,
To bear thee on thy way.

TO

FOLLY.

HAIL! goddess of the vacant eye!
To whom my earliest vows were paid;—
Whose prattle hush'd my infant cry,
As on thy lap supinely laid,
I saw thee shake in sportive mood
Thy tinkling bells and antic hood.

Enlisted in the school-boy band,
With thee from learning's porch I fled;
And though the pedant's tyrant hand
Hung threat'ning o'er my flaxen head;—

Long were my truant footsteps seen
In thy brisk gambols on the green.

At length, with vast conceits inspir'd,
I bade thee and thy sports adieu':—
But when, with expectation fir'd,
I to the world's wide circle flew,
I look'd around, with simple stare,
And found thee in broad features there:—

There saw thee, high in regal seat,
Thy crowded, clam'rous orgies hold;
With bounding hands thy cymbals beat,
And full thy tawdry flag unfold;—
Proud that thy motley liv'ries shone
On myriads who begirt thy throne.

Again in social league we join'd;
Through fancied fields of bliss we stray'd;

A thousand wonders we design'd,
A thousand idle pranks we play'd,—
Now grasp'd at glory's quiv'ring ray,
And now in CHLOE'S chains we lay.

But, FOLLY, why prolong my verse,
To sing the laughter-loving age?
And what avails it to rehearse
Thy triumphs on the youthful stage?
Where Wisdom, if she claims a place,
Sits ever with an awkward grace!

For now, ev'n now, in riper years,
Spite of thy many-colour'd vest,
Oft I renounce my cautious fears,
And clasp thee to my thoughtless breast;
Enough, that in Presumption's mien
Beneath my roof thou ne'er art seen.

That, as my harmless course I run,
With candid eyes the world I view;—
And still with gen'rous pity shun
The moody, moping, serious crew;
Since what they fondly, vainly prize,
Is ever, ever to be wise.

THE END.

J. Brettell, Printer,
Marshall-street, Golden-square.

00046619

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 28 September, 2015